

Home designs with vision

ARCHITECTURE

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Among several Context/Alliance projects in the works, one in particular embodies the team's determination to explore housing as a significant architectural activity. HOME Condominiums near High Park will occupy the former site of two gas stations that sat derelict for a decade. The project was faced with a number of complex conditions, including negotiating a 50% slope from north to south, responding to the significant urban green space of nearby High Park and mediating the scale of the building for neighbouring single-family residences. (The project was the subject of considerable opposition from neighbours, but last year got the nod from the Ontario Municipal Board.)

The project negotiates these conditions by presenting a six-storey façade to Bloor Street (again, with retail at grade), and stepping down along the slope to a height of 10 storeys at its southeast corner. The terraced south side provides deep balconies overlooking the park. A series of projecting sun-shading devices reduces heat gain from the high summer sun, but allows lower winter rays to penetrate and help heat the apartments.

HOME Condominiums was recognized with a 2001 Canadian Architect Award of Excellence — an award program organized by *Canadian Architect* magazine for projects in the design stage. It is the first commercial condominium project to receive the award in several years. (District Lofts was a finalist in 2000.)

The Context/Alliance projects show that despite the negative associations that have dogged modernist housing, the lessons of modern architecture are still relevant. The projects not only look modern (many contemporary projects adopt modernism as a superficial esthetic), but, by experimenting with plan and section to optimize conditions within the units, they embody the innovative spirit behind the modernist drive to create better housing.

Equally important, they reveal that the lessons surrounding modernism's shortcomings have not been lost. Unlike their earlier counterparts, they make serious gestures to the street and establish a clear presence at ground level, correcting one of the modern movement's most significant failings.



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